

CHANGE OF PACE



This activity is described in Traffic School (chapter 7). Here it is used for cardiorespiratory workouts. Changing pace is more difficult than maintaining pace; it includes controlling momentum. Call out various speeds. Be careful about using the fast or fast-stopping commands at first. Here are some examples:

- ⦿ Walk slow. Walk slower. Walk very, very slowly.
- ⦿ Step by step, inch by inch, slowly we turn.
- ⦿ Pick up the pace. It's time to get going!
- ⦿ Walk fast. Walk faster. Walk as fast as you safely can.

You can increase the balance challenge of this activity by doing the following:

- ⦿ Stop: Use stops only during slow paces at first. Then stop during a more moderate pace. For advanced participants, do fast stops.
- ⦿ Change directions: Call out changes in direction several times. If the room is big enough and you have good crowd control (participants are spaced out), use left and right turns as direction changes, too.
- ⦿ Stop and go: Intersperse these two commands here and there. When you say *stop*, they should stop as quickly as they safely can. For *go*, they should get going as quickly as they can.

For more able groups, consider the following ideas for WalkAbouts. These increased balance challenges require closer supervision. Have participants take turns so you can be available to hold hands, or have plenty of balance support nearby, such as handrails or a set of chairs.

- ⦿ March (beside a handrail).
 - Big steps with abs in
 - Little steps
 - Big again
- ⦿ Add music.
- ⦿ Walk in opposing directions (see Opposing Circles, page 255).
- ⦿ Walk with head turns (beside a handrail). This one is tricky; they may get dizzy or clumsy. Often participants turn their whole body or lose their footing when they turn their head. See chapter 7 for more on introducing this movement.)
- ⦿ Use arm swings.
 - Use big arms swings.
 - Bend the elbows (it's easier).
 - Can they feel the momentum arm swings add to their walking motion?
- ⦿ Take big, long steps (similar to lunge steps).
 - Cross an imaginary chasm.
 - How much distance can one step cover? Are both legs equally good at covering distance?
- ⦿ Add bridges, tunnels, and corners. Look around, find something that you can walk under, such as an overhanging wall or a stairway. Participants can also form a bridge that lowers or raises as participants duck under to pass through.

- ⦿ Use corners in the room. As part of the balance challenge course, walk into and out of a corner. See if they can use a pivot step out of the corner.
- ⦿ Combine arm swings with marching, then with big steps, and then with big, long steps. For advanced groups, add a head turn to big, long steps.
- ⦿ Do figure eights. Put out cones or place chairs for participants to go around in a figure-eight pattern. Some days use patterns that are tight; for example, they'll need to pass between a wall and a chair. Or, advanced participants can go through the pattern while sidestepping.
- ⦿ Dim the lights. Turn them down just enough to dim the room and get their attention. There should be no other obstacles in a dim room. A good progression in a dim room could be to give them flashlights and have them point the lights farther and farther ahead in their path until they are looking more forward than down as they walk. You could place objects for them to find with their flashlights—birds on the walls or ceilings, squirrels on the low walls, the telephone, the light switch, the bucket you've stocked with candy!
- ⦿ Side Steps Walking.
- ⦿ Walk tandem lines: Use masking tape in a straight line that participants try to walk along.
- ⦿ Walk squiggling tandem lines: Use masking tape to create long, wavy lines.
- ⦿ Step only on agility dots: Set out agility dots or masking tape Xs in a pattern that calls for big, long steps or a wide stepping pattern.
- ⦿ Add a step to walk up and over. Participants will step up onto the step and then off. Cue them to make it a part of their stride if they can.
- ⦿ Add a balance pad to step up and over.
- ⦿ Step over hurdles. Set out a few small hurdles, 6 inches (15 centimeters) or lower, to step over. If you have no hurdles, put down a brightly colored object such as a book or shoe box.

Keep It Safe »

Most variations need a handrail, row of chairs, or other balance support. Watch participants for signs of being overly tired, dizzy, or otherwise not tolerating the activity well. Let them know they should be able to walk and talk, and remind them to pay attention to how they feel. Share responsibility with them; they are capable of monitoring how they feel.

Be prepared to manage traffic problems. Canes, walkers, and many differences in walking speed, seeing, and hearing abilities means you need to plan for traffic. Keep people spread out. You might have a slow lane (inside lane) and a faster lane (outside lane); you can tell participants to be courteous and careful passers. Keep the area clear of obstacles and equipment.